

Barcelona under

Beirut

Barcelona's authorities came under fire yesterday for failing to put up security barriers at the seaside city's main tourist thoroughfare, Las Ramblas, the site of a deadly jihadist attack two days ago.

An outcry has erupted on social media and in the

press about the absence of bollards -- short concrete posts designed to stop vehicles from driving onto sidewalks, with some people even demanding the mayor's resignation for ignoring police recommendations for such preventive barriers.

But Ada Colau, the mayor

of Barcelona, Spain's most popular tourist destination, hit back, arguing that "it's not the right place to talk today about what could have been avoided by placing bollards at Las Ramblas."

"The perpetrators of the attack wanted to kill and if they were unable to enter Las

Ramblas, they would have done so elsewhere, and we can't put security barriers all over a city like Barcelona," she said.

City officials also said that such decisions are adopted in conjunction with regional and state authorities.

Although Spain's interior

ministry had recommended that cities erect security barriers at crowded places, the tripartite security council of state, regional and city authorities had decided against them for Las Ramblas.

"There's already a lot of structures -- trees, benches, kiosks, street-lamps -- and

adding more would hinder the access of emergency vehicles," a spokesman for local authorities said.

With Spain's terror threat level at four out of a maximum five, Barcelona had ramped up security at concerts and festivities.

'No sign of radicalisation': father



Spain's Queen Letizia visiting victims of the Barcelona attack at the Hospital del Mar in Barcelona

Melouiya

Residents of Melouiya, a village high in Morocco's Atlas Mountains, are in shock at the news two of their sons were implicated in terror attacks in Spain.

A traditional tent set up on a rocky patch of ground near the rough stone house of the Oukabir family, originally intended for a wedding reception, has been turned into a funeral tent.

"Joy has given way to sadness and pain," said Abderrahim, in his forties, an uncle of the Oukabir brothers.

Driss Oukabir, 27, was arrested in the Spanish town of Ripoll on Thursday just hours after a van sped into crowds on the busy Las Ramblas avenue in central Barcelona, leaving 13 people dead.

His brother Moussa, 17, was one of five "suspected terrorists" shot dead after knocking down pedestrians in the Catalan seaside resort of Cambrils in a second attack in the early hours of Friday.

"We are in shock, completely distraught", said the father of the two young men, Said, with

tears in his eyes.

With an athletic build and a baseball cap on his head, he was surrounded by family members, neighbours and friends who had come to offer their condolences.

"Spanish police called Moussa's mother who is in Spain to tell her that he was dead," he said shortly before the official announcement by police on Friday night.

The twin terror attacks left 14 people dead and some 120 wounded. "We are simple, peaceful people. We don't know anything about radicalism or terrorism," another resident said.

'Nice boy'

The economy of the impoverished, mostly Berber-speaking region is based mainly on farming, herding and money sent home by family members working in Europe.

Said Oukabir left to try his luck on the other side of the Mediterranean in the 1990s.

With his son Driss, who was 10 at the time, he headed for the province of Girona in

Catalonia.

Moussa, who would have celebrated his 18th birthday in October, was born in Ripoll, a Spanish town of around 10,000 people about 100 kilometres (60 miles) north of Barcelona.

The family have since lived between Spain, Melouiya and another Moroccan town, Aghbala.

The news that the two brothers were implicated in the Spain attacks shocked relatives, who said they had no idea the pair had been radicalised.

"The whole region is in shock," Moussa's uncle said. "He was gentle, always smiling, he didn't smoke or drink."

Said said his sons had shown no sign of radicalisation.

"They lived like the young people of their age, dressed like them," said their father, who was called in by Moroccan police early on Saturday.

"Moussa was a nice boy who didn't hurt anyone."

"He was attending classes and was going to take his high school exams next year. He recently started praying... but it stopped there."

He said the young man,



Omar, 4 year-old, holds a message reading "I a Muslim, not a terrorist"

who has three sisters, had "doubtless" been manipulated.

A cousin said Moussa "loved playing football, having a good time, chatting up girls".

He travelled to Morocco almost every year for the summer holidays and was expected back last Tuesday, the

cousin said.

"The last few months, he started to become interested in religion. He used to go to a mosque in Ripoll. Maybe that's where he was brainwashed," he said, adding that the brothers' parents had recently divorced.

Their father said that Driss,

the older brother, had "left school early to work honestly and earn a living".

"Today he is between the hands of God and the police. He is under investigation. I hope they will say he's innocent. I don't want to lose both my sons." (AFP)